# July 18, 2006 Meeting Minutes Potomac Yard Fire Station and Affordable Housing Task Force

Andrew Hall of the Del Ray Civic Association called the meeting to order at 7:10pm, in meeting room two of the Mount Vernon Recreation Center on Commonwealth Avenue.

The following representatives were in attendance:

Andrew Hall, Del Ray Civic Association, Task Force Chairman John Starcher, Warwick Village

Dan Abramson,

Colleen Rafferty, Alexandria Planning & Zoning

Amy Tarce, Alexandria Planning & Zoning

Jeff Farner, Alexandria Planning & Zoning

Sylvia Sibrover

Mildrilyn Davis, Director, Alexandria Office of Housing

John North, Battalion Chief, Alexandria Fire Department

David Fromm

**Duncan Blair** 

Brian Hannigan, Alexandria Communications Director

Melissa Watson, Lynhaven Civic Association

Amy Slack

Kate Rollins, Old Town Greens

Jim Schwartz, Fire Chief, Arlington Fire Department, City of Alexandria resident

Helen McIlvaine, Alexandria Office of Housing

Tom Welsh, PWBA

Mariella Posey, Northeast Citizens' Association

Art Dahlberg, Director of Alexandria Code Enforcement

Gary Mesaris, Fire Chief, Alexandria Fire Department

Michelle Evans, Deputy Assistant City Manager

Minutes prepared by: Cameron Hall, Alexandria Fire Department

# **Fire Station Briefing**

After thanking the participants for their attendance, Gary Mesaris, Alexandria Fire Chief, addressed the Potomac Yard fire station proposal. Due to the age of Alexandria's fire stations, the condition of the buildings is poor and many are in need of renovation.

In particular, is station 202, located on Windsor Avenue. It was built in 1926 as the Town Hall for the Town of Potomac. It was converted to the Potomac Truck and Engine Company shortly thereafter. The City of Alexandria obtained the station as a result of annexation in 1930.

Currently housed at station 202 are a frontline engine company, an Advanced Life Support (ALS) medic unit, three hazardous materials response units, and three hazardous materials

support trailers. Due to storage constraints, the hazardous materials/WMD trailers, a medical support unit, and three SEA containers are stored outdoors.

The developer of the Potomac Yard project has proposed constructing a new, state of the art station with modern ADA compliant living quarters and enlarged bays that will accommodate modern fire suppression apparatus as well as house equipment that is currently stored outdoors at the Windsor Avenue station.

Alexandria will move the fire suppression/HazMat personnel and equipment to the Potomac Yard station, while the EMS functions will remain at Station 202, on Windsor Avenue. Attached are the coverage maps showing the response times associated with this move. The maps show that service delivery is well within department response goals and that the service area would continue to have redundant coverage. The areas of greatest demand remain Potomac Yard and Arlandria.

The new station in Potomac Yard, which will be dubbed station 209, will be located near the "Town Center" which will allow quick access to the main arterials into Del Ray and other surrounding communities. The streets and sidewalks in Potomac Yard will be constructed to be wider to allow for better maneuverability of apparatus. Current plans have the street widths set at 40 feet curb to curb. In addition, the station will face a service street in order to minimize the impact on vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

Other advantages to the Potomac Yard station include a community room for use by Alexandria residents and training for Fire Department staff. The dormitory portion of the station will reflect the changing demographics of the fire department and allow for individual private bedrooms. With the addition of more females in fire suppression, the need to change from common bunkrooms is a necessity.

## **Potomac Yard Affordable Housing**

Helen McIlvaine from the Office of Housing addressed the project as it relates to affordable housing. The proposal from the developer is to include up to sixty housing units above the fire station. The actual terms of the housing has yet to be determined. The options include fixed income condominiums and/or affordable rental units. The goal is to maintain the property as affordable housing in the long term.

The current plan is to serve households that earn approximately \$54,000 annually, which would set the rents about \$1500 per month. Any future residents would need to have correlating incomes. Market rate and discounted rents, as well as tax credit programs are also feasible. There is no current plan to include any program that would include a city subsidy.

## **Community Concerns and Feedback**

The room was opened to an informal round table discussion to address citizen concerns and questions.

 A major concern addressed by meeting participants was the issue of noise in the housing units above the fire station.

Art Dahlberg, Director of Code Enforcement addressed those concerns stating that new technologies exist that will limit or isolate the building vibration and station apparatus noise. Examples include triple paned windows, bifold, rather than overhead bay doors, and quality insulation. These concerns are already being addressed and will continue with comprehensive sound studies involving qualified sound engineers.

Additionally, Fire Chief Mesaris stated that operational policies and procedures would be adjusted, if needed, to address this issue.

• In earlier meetings on the Potomac Yard project, the decisions about the area of Land Bay H were deferred. The reasons for this deferment are to address the concerns of fire apparatus maneuverability and the location of the fire station. Outreach sessions will be held to guide the decision making process before the proposal is presented to City Council.

With the buildings in the Potomac Yard development constructed closer to the street and with the inclusion of parks and retail centers, the challenge is to find a balance with good urban design, affordable housing, and code compliance. Art Dahlberg stated that the developer has agreed, in concept, to incorporate sprinkler systems in all new buildings that exceed current code standards.

- Helen McIlvaine assured the participants that the affordable housing proposal would include special accommodations for Alexandria police officers, firefighters, medics, and teachers.
   These members of our community may receive preferential consideration in obtaining these housing units.
- There are plans to renovate station 202 on Windsor Avenue, but the project has been delayed due to the addition of the Potomac Yard development. That project is expected to begin in the fall of 2007. The current state of the fire stations is an issue mainly due to the fact that fire and EMS personnel work in 24-hour shifts. Therefore, they are required to "live" in the station during working hours.
- One challenge for station 202 is the inability for it to house modern fire apparatus due to the size and height of the bays and accommodate the equipment recently acquired through the Homeland Security Grants. Much of this equipment is currently stored outdoors. The current building would need to be razed in order to meet the needs and will not be considered because it is a historical building. Station 208, located on North Paxton is an example of inadequate planning for the future. It was designed as a two bay station that would address the needs of the City when it was constructed, not the needs of a growing community.
- A concern voiced by Tom Welsh on behalf of Del Ray residents is the loss of the Windsor Avenue fire suppression service. With the average age of homes in Del Ray, residents are concerned about fire safety. Art Dahlberg stated that studies have shown that most fires occur due to human error, leaving a stove or candle unattended, for example. Fortunately, residents in the Del Ray community currently have a redundancy of four-minute response service and

that would continue with the construction of station 209. This means that units from several stations may respond within the four-minute response standard.

The fiscal impact of maintaining the staffing of suppression units at station 202 is a larger concern for the city. Chief Schwartz, a resident of the Del Ray and the Arlington Fire Chief stated that it is more important to have equitable service throughout the city before addressing redundancy. There are currently residents in the Eisenhower Valley section that have no four minute response service and therefore any new hires should be placed in service there first.

Arlington County is currently experiencing some of the same issues with growth in Crystal City. To address this issue, they have considered moving the Fairlington Fire Station to lower Glebe Road. If the station is relocated, the residents of Fairlington will still have at least four-minute response, as will those in Crystal City. Without moving the Fairlington station, residents in Crystal City may have to wait at least six to eight minutes for service. This is an issue of equitable distribution of service and resources.

Michelle Evans, Deputy City Manager of the City of Alexandria suggested studying the cost of staffing and maintaining both station 202 and 209. Conservative estimates are \$800,000 per year in operating costs, which includes recruiting, hiring, and maintaining twelve additional personnel and another one time cost of \$500,000 to purchase apparatus.

- It was determined that if the developer was not proposing to include the fire station in the Potomac Yard plans, the City would then have to come up with the capital to build it at an approximate cost of \$6 million plus the cost of the acquiring the land.
- City resident, David Fromm suggested dividing the two issues of redistributing the resources and constructing the new station. If the resources do not allow for two operating stations, the Windsor Avenue station should remain open and operational while the newly built station in Potomac Yard be used only as storage for the department's equipment and apparatus. He continued that residents in Potomac Yard should be able to raise enough tax funding to afford to operate and staff fire suppression out of station 209.

A copy of the initial draft of the informational brochure was distributed. Feedback is requested at the next meeting.

The participants agreed that the staffing issues at station 202 do not need to be addressed at the current time and a decision is unlikely by the September deadline. As a result the task force set a follow up meeting for Tuesday, July 25, 2006 at 7pm. The location is to be determined by City personnel and the task force members will be notified as soon as possible.

# July 25, 2006 Meeting Minutes Potomac Yard Fire Station and Affordable Housing Task Force

Andrew Hall, Task Force Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm in the cafeteria of the Mount Vernon Community School on Commonwealth Avenue.

The following Task Force representatives were in attendance:

Andrew Hall, Del Ray Citizens Association

John Starcher, Warwick Village

Jim Schwartz, Arlington Fire Chief and Del Ray resident

M. Patricia Schubert, Inner City Civic Association

Tom Welsh, PWBA

Kate Rollins, Old Town Greens

Melissa Watson, Lynhaven Civic Association

The following City employees were in attendance:

Gary Mesaris, Fire Chief

Vince Whitmore, Assistant Fire Chief

John North, Battalion Chief

Art Dahlberg, Director of Code Enforcement

Jannine Pennell, Deputy Director of Code Enforcement

Brain Hannigan, Public Information Officer

Jeff Farner, Director, Planning and Zoning

Amy Tarce, Planning and Zoning

Colleen Rafferty, Planning and Zoning

Sandy Murphy, Office of Management and Budget

Eddie Reyes, Police

Mildrilyn Davis, Director, Office of Housing

Helen McIlvaine, Deputy Director, Office of Housing

## The following guests were in attendance:

Lynn Kimmerly Lana Slack Ted Kimmerly Scott Newham Leslie Hagan John Porter Elise Reeder Barbara Dill Ellen Pickeling Anne Marime Judy Lowe Leslie Hagan Maggie Rivers Elise Reeder Judy Harper David Englin Cathy Puskar Larry Altenburg

Minutes prepared by: Cameron Hall, Alexandria Fire Department

Following brief introductions of the task force panel, Andrew Hall, Task Force Chairman, asked for questions on the July 18th meeting minutes. As there were no questions, the minutes were approved and recorded.

A sub-group of the task force had met on Saturday, July 22, 2006 and prepared a list of information to be compiled by City staff from the Fire Department and Planning and Zoning.

The Fire Department compiled data on incident responses and Chief Mesaris presented the information in a power point presentation. That presentation was given as handouts and is attached for review.

#### Slide #1:

The information in the first slide shows the type and number of incidents the crew at Station 202, Windsor Avenue responds in correlation with that of the entire city. "Suppression Other" refers to incidents such as alarm bells, false alarms, smell of smoke without a known fire, or even someone stuck inside an elevator.

#### Slide #2:

For purposes of response, the Fire Department has divided the city into "fire zone boxes," which determines which unit is dispatched.

#### Slides #3 and #4:

Show the average number of incidents from each zone box over the last five years for EMS and suppression, respectively. The map is color coded according to rates of occurrences.

#### Slides #5 and #6:

The area served by station 202, Windsor Avenue, may be located on the zone map as any box beginning with the numbers 52. These slides will show which unit and the number of incidents in which that unit was the first on scene.

## Slides #7 and #8:

The data on these slides shows the number of instances in which Medic 202 and Engine 202, respectively, respond within the zone boxes associated with Station 202, Windsor Avenue. Because the fire department was established and operates on a city wide system, not as a community department, other units may respond to an incident outside of it's assigned zone boxes if the first due unit is previously committed. Two hand outs were included as part of the presentation in order to show a breakdown of suppression incidents in each zone box as well as the number and type of incidents covered by station 202.

In response to a question, Chief Mesaris spoke briefly about mutual aid agreements with surrounding jurisdictions. The Alexandria Fire Department may respond to incidents in surrounding jurisdictions, including (but not limited to) Arlington County, Fairfax County, Washington, D.C., and Reagan National Airport, if home units are occupied.

## Slides #9 and #10:

These slides include data for both EMS and suppression, respectively, on the number of responses made by the units of station 202; including Medic 202 and Engine 202 both inside and outside of the station 202 zone boxes.

#### Slide #11:

This is a map of current census tract information for the entire city. The census tracts do not match the fire zone boxes; therefore it is difficult to determine the exact population of an area served by a particular station.

Also included in the information packet is a sample of actual dispatch times for first arriving units in the station 202 areas. Please note that there are instances in which another unit, rather than 202 will arrive first.

#### Slide #12 and #13:

There are five schools (three public and two private) located within the station 202 response area and the travel/response times are indicated. All response times are within the department and national standard of four minutes.

#### Slide #14:

This is a cost analysis of maintaining the suppression staffing levels at Station 202 in addition to Station 209, Potomac Yard.

If there are questions regarding the data, terminology, or anything else in the presentation, please forward those to Andrew Hall. All comments and questions will be forwarded to Fire Department staff.

The office of Planning and Zoning distributed information regarding the use of each land bay in the Potomac Yard development, a projected timeline and work program for the task force, as well as population forecasts. (Attachment)

The question of daytime population in comparison to resident population is currently being studied and will be released as soon as possible.

## Feedback, Ouestions, and Concerns

• One Del Ray resident, recently had a house fire and expressed concern that if the Windsor Avenue station is moved there will be further fire damage, loss of life and property because the homes in the Del Ray area burn more quickly than those in other areas of the City. These houses were built prior to current building code standards and even a slight change in response time could be detrimental. She questioned if the Potomac Yard development, given its size should have its own station. In addition, she stated that her insurance company issued her insurance based on the proximity of her house to the fire station. She is worried that insurance rates would increase if the suppression capability were moved out of Station 202.

Chief Mesaris responded that suppression and EMS service and the need for additional stations and/or resources are constantly monitored. However, there is no correlation between the age of a building and the likelihood of fire, as most fires are caused by human error. In fact, new construction has proven to be more likely to experience fire damage due to the materials used.

He continued that there would be no degradation in service, as there is excellent, redundant coverage in the Del Ray area. All areas will fall into the four-minute response goals established for the entire city. Also the medical support services will remain at station 202, Windsor Avenue. There are no plans to close the station, however renovations plans will continue.

Chief Schwartz, of Arlington County, and a Del Ray resident addressed the issue of insurance rates. He explained that each city is assigned an ISO class rating and the distance between a house and a fire station is irrelevant in determining insurance rates. The City of Alexandria has a rating of three and will not change based on the location of the facility or resources. He continued that he has found nothing in the data to show that there will be degradation in service and that other areas in Alexandria have more dire need for these resources, including Eisenhower Valley.

Because the station on Windsor Avenue will not close and if it is determined in the future that service has been compromised, resources could then be added back.

- Apparatus size and the ability of each piece to navigate through the narrow streets of Del Ray was another concern expressed. Chief Mesaris stated that while modern fire apparatus are getting larger, it is generally in height and length, not width. Also, the routes out of Potomac Yard and into Del Ray will focus on the major arterials with controlled intersections first. It is also a possibility that fire personnel may preempt the traffic signals.
- Tom Welsh, of the PWBA asked if the small engine currently running out of station 202 should remain there, as it was specifically built for that location. He suggested that the city hire additional personnel to cover an added station, rather than expecting the existing personnel to support twice the amount of space.

The plan for station 209, in Potomac Yard is that it would not operate with additional personnel. The personnel located at station 202, Windsor Avenue would simply move to station 209. These personnel have specialty training in hazardous materials and the new station would house all the specialized hazardous materials equipment, as well as one engine.

Helen McIlvane, Deputy Director of the Office of Housing, stated that the greatest advantage to the Potomac Yard project is that the City will save the cost of land and will potentially be able to include sixty units of affordable housing. The developer is voluntarily donating this land and the city is merely trying to maximize that contribution. Under the current affordable housing system the developer has no obligation to make this contribution. Negotiations are not yet complete. Questions were raised on how many units the developer would include if the project stalled or was not completed. Ms. McIlvane answered that they would fulfill the requirements of affordable housing units, but that number would be less or the City would need to find additional ways to finance the housing.

The developer contribution to the Potomac Yard development is approximately \$10.5 million with a portion going to build the fire station and the housing above. The real estate tax revenue will need to cover services such as maintaining streets, sewers, schools, and parks. A study of the breakdown of these costs will be given to the public as soon as possible.

- The project was initially approved in 1999, but is a multi-step approval process. When the plan was approved, city leadership at the time decided that an additional fire station was not needed in Potomac Yard, as the current system was adequate. Further research done since has indicated that additional resources should be added in order for the city to maintain nationally recognized fire safety standards. This opportunity was presented and no final decisions have been made. The purpose of these outreach sessions is to address resident concerns, provide information, and attain feedback.
- Larry Altenberg, of the Del Ray Citizens Association, suggested that each of the projects be researched independently and feels that the developer is forcing the city to make an all or nothing choice. The planning commission is set to meet in September and the task force needs to have a recommendation by then. He suggested that the decision be delayed until further outreach can be completed. Art Dahlberg, Director of Code Enforcement stated that the original plan was to go to the planning commission in June, but was deferred in order to address community issues and receive feedback. The project may be delayed, but a cost would be associated. The city is cognoscente of residents' desire to keep a low tax rate and any changes would affect our fiscal reality.

It was suggested that each neighborhood civic association distribute an informational newsletter to each participant or resident. The minutes and all other materials from each meeting will be posted on the planning and zoning website. Task force members, city staff from the Fire Department, Planning and Zoning, and the Office of Housing will participate in National Night Out on August 1, 2006. In addition, a letter will be sent to each of the schools as they begin the new school year.

The next meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, August 8, 2006 at the Mount Vernon Community School cafeteria at 7pm. The Task Force will meet independently to discuss and prepare recommendations and presentations.

Questions should be directed to Andrew Hall via email at Andrew.B.Hall@saic.com or to John Starcher at Jstarcher@hotmail.com.

# August 8, 2006 Meeting Minutes Potomac Yard Fire Station and Affordable Housing Task Force

Andrew Hall, Task Force Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:13 pm in the cafeteria of the Mount Vernon Community School on Commonwealth Avenue.

The following Task Force representatives were in attendance: Andrew Hall, Del Ray Citizens Association
John Starcher, Warwick Village
Jim Schwartz, Arlington Fire Chief and Del Ray resident
Tom Welsh, PWBA
Kate Rollins, Old Town Greens
Melissa Watson, Lynhaven Civic Association

The following City employees were in attendance:
Councilman Paul Smedberg
Gary Mesaris, Fire Chief
Art Dahlberg, Director of Code Enforcement
Brain Hannigan, Public Information Officer
Jeff Farner, Development Division Chief, Planning and Zoning
Amy Tarce, Planning and Zoning
Raka Choudhury, Planning and Zoning
Colleen Rafferty, Planning and Zoning
Sandy Murphy, Office of Management and Budget
Helen McIlvaine, Deputy Director, Office of Housing

The following guests were in attendance:

Tom Baycroft Judy Lowe Judy Harper Kevin Beekman David Fromm Amy Slack Larry Campbell Sylvia Sibrover

Minutes prepared by: Cameron Hall, Alexandria Fire Department

The Developer has submitted a letter requesting the Potomac Yard item that includes the proposed fire station and affordable housing be deferred to the October 3<sup>rd</sup> Planning Commission meeting. That formal letter is on the website along with meeting agendas and minutes. That website is <a href="http://ci.alexandria.va.us/planningandzoning/potomac\_yard.php">http://ci.alexandria.va.us/planningandzoning/potomac\_yard.php</a>

The task force held a work session on Wednesday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>. The meeting minutes were submitted on August 8<sup>th</sup>, therefore, the minutes were not reviewed and approval has been tabled until next week.

## **Fire Station**

Chief Mesaris gave a brief overview of the fire station proposal. The main issue of concern for the Fire Department is service delivery. Officials from the Department and the City researched the service delivery changes using a computer model and four-minute response goals. The attached maps will show the current and proposed response times.

The Medical Director, Dr. Vafier for the Alexandria Fire Department has established a goal of four-minute response time standard. National standards range from four to eight minutes.

Station 202, on Windsor Avenue in Del Ray currently has redundant coverage, meaning that more than one station may respond to the area in four minutes or less. Moving the suppression units to Station 209, Potomac Yard will have little impact on the Del Ray area and allow for greater access to the northern portions of the City.

The EMS unit will remain at Station 202, Windsor Avenue. An EMS Supervisor will be added.

Response routes have not yet been determined for the Potomac Yard development. Possible routes include using the local roads inside the development and using controlled intersections, such as East Glebe, Swann, Howe, and Custis to cross into Del Ray. Fire personnel through a signal preemption if necessary could control the traffic lights.

Area schools were studied to determine the changes in response times. Please find the attached listing of school response times.

## **Affordable Housing**

Helen McIlvaine, of the Office of Housing presented the proposal for the affordable housing project. The presentation is attached.

The developer's voluntary affordable housing contribution for the overall site is estimated at \$10.5 million. They may fulfill that contribution through a monetary payment or through the commitment of specific units of affordable housing. The City and the Developer are working to identify potential sites, in order to achieve the greatest number of units.

The fire station proposal is planned to be four stories, containing approximately 60 units. The proposal includes underground parking, a community room, business center, fitness center, and access to a rooftop garden. Delivery of these units could happen as early as 2008. The firehouse would be delivered at the same time the first unit is ready to be occupied should this project continue.

Affordable housing is a term used to describe rental or for sale housing where the maximum rent/sales price is set at or below 60% of the area median income. The Washington metropolitan region has a median income of approximately \$90,300 for a household of four.

# Proposed Income limits:

1 Person: \$37,920 2 Persons: \$43,320 3 Persons: \$48,780 4 Persons: \$54,180

The Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program was enacted by the Federal Government, but is administered by the state's housing authority, the Virginia Housing Development Association (VHDA). The program enables private investments in the production of affordable housing. Developers apply for tax credits based on project costs. These credits are sold to entities with tax liabilities, which provide equity for the credits in return. The maximum gross rents per month, including utilities are \$1,015/one bedroom, \$1,219/two bedroom, and \$1,408/three bedroom.

Workforce housing is another option for the space. Workforce housing describes rental or for sale housing where the maximum rent is set at a level that is affordable for local working households with income at or above 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI). This project has been modeled at 80% AMI.

## Estimated income levels for this project:

1 Person: \$41,700 2 Persons: \$47,700 3 Persons: \$53,650 4 Persons: \$59,600

The mixed-use developments are considered "Smart Growth" in urban areas, as they allow for public facilities and maximize the use of land. If the fire station is not realized, the developer will still contribute his obligation of \$10.5 million. The advantage to the mixed-use building is that the city can leverage other funds like tax credits to further stretch the developer contribution.

The city has decided to try and enlarge the developer-funded fire station by adding an additional bay to the three bays in the initial proposal. This will be funded by the City and has been estimated approximate cost of \$500,000. The reason for the addition is to provide much needed space for fire apparatus and equipment. This is just a proposal and has not yet been presented to council.

During the initial concept plan in the late 1990s, the plan was to create an urban model, as opposed to a suburban one, for the Potomac Yard area. The plan included narrow streets and buildings placed close to the street. This could have presented problems with the turning radius of fire apparatus. The developer has proposed the fire station and affordable housing project in order to mitigate some of the code compliant issues, but this is an on-going negotiation.

Jeff Farner of Planning and Zoning, addressed concerns regarding the infrastructure accommodations for the project. The Monroe Street Bridge is being straightened; two additional north/south connections will be added, Potomac Avenue and Main Street. Potomac Avenue will run behind the shopping center and cross Four Mile Run. Main Street will be aligned in front of the Target shopping center. There have been discussions about a possible bus rapid transit (BRT) line at Route 1. The future configuration will require involvement of the community, review by City Staff, and approval by City Council. Additional plans and further activity will be completed in the next six to eight months as the project prepares for construction.

## Fire Department Service Determinations and Budgets

The Fire Department determines service according, but not limited, to population density, flow rate, and construction. Trends in response times are constantly monitored and changes and/or additions are made as necessary.

It is important to realize that a particular fire engine or truck may not be in its station at any given time. Pumpers are not designed for a certain community or neighborhood. The Fire Department is a system that works in conjunction with other jurisdictions. For example, if Engine 202 is committed on another emergency, the City of Alexandria may call upon Arlington's Crystal City unit to respond to the Del Ray area. All trucks and engines are capable of accommodating any neighborhood or community, as they are relatively the same in size. The reason that the pumper at station 202 is smaller is due to the size of the building, not the width of the streets.

The fire department system may also call upon personnel from other jurisdictions to move into an Alexandria station during large-scale emergencies or events.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 15, 2006 at the Mount Vernon Recreation Center on Commonwealth Avenue at 7pm. This will be a work session for the task force and while it is open to the public, public comment will not be allowed.

# August 15, 2006 Meeting Minutes Potomac Yard Fire Station & Affordable Housing Task Force

Andrew Hall, Task Force Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm in the meeting room of the Mount Vernon Recreation Center on Commonwealth Avenue.

The following Task Force representatives were in attendance: Andrew Hall, Del Ray Citizens Association
Jim Schwartz, Arlington Fire Chief and Del Ray resident
Kate Rollins, Old Town Greens
Melissa Watson, Lynhaven Civic Association
Mariella Posey, NorthEast Citizens' Association
M. Patricia Schubert, ICCA

The following City employees were in attendance:
Michelle Evans, Deputy City Manager
Gary Mesaris, Fire Chief
Art Dahlberg, Director of Code Enforcement
Brain Hannigan, Public Information Officer
Jeff Farner, Director, Planning and Zoning
Amy Tarce, Planning and Zoning
Colleen Rafferty, Planning and Zoning
Helen McIlvaine, Office of Housing
John North, Battalion Chief
Raka Choudhury, Planning and Zoning
Sandy Murphy, Office of Management and Budget
Jannine Pennell, Deputy Director of Code Enforcement

The following guests were in attendance:
Duncan Blair, LCCMdB
Cathy Puskar, Walsh Colucci
Stan Settle, Potomac Yard, LLC
Sylvia Sibrover
Howard Katz, Potomac Yard, LLC
Bruce McLead, Commonwealth Consultants

Minutes prepared by: Cameron Hall, Alexandria Fire Department

After brief introductions, Michelle Evans stated that the Developer was in attendance to answer questions and clarify previous information. The questions submitted by the task force will be addressed during the meeting and a written copy will be distributed at the August  $22^{nd}$  meeting.

The first point of clarification was the City is not in need of a fire station at the current time, but this is a good opportunity to plan for the future. If a station is not built, it will not prevent the Potomac Yard project from going forward.

## **Planning and Zoning**

Jeff Farner, of Planning and Zoning, addressed concerns of street width and turning radiuses in the new development. The design plan has set a street guideline in Potomac Yard at 64 feet wide. In comparison, Old Town streets are 66 feet wide. The addition of the fire station has nothing to do with the widths of the streets in the development.

Attached is the power point presentation made by Jeff Farner during the meeting.

Art Dahlberg continued to clarify the point with a discussion on alleyways in the development. The alleys have been designed larger than those in Old Town, but the throat of each alley will be narrower as to discourage traffic to travel there. The streets are not so narrow that fire apparatus or other essential equipment will be impeded.

Other options will continue to be discussed, as this is a multi-agency approach. There have been no agreements made to date, only proposals. This task force has been established to provide outreach and gather information from citizens to present to council.

# **Fire Department**

In order to clarify the information that was presented in the media, Chief Mesaris stated that the size of engine pumpers and the width of the streets have no correlation. The engine assigned to station 202 on Windsor Avenue is smaller than other engine pumpers throughout the city is due to the size of the station, not the width of the streets. Apparatus information is attached.

To answer questions posed by the task force to city staff, corrections have been made to the school response times. The additional minute of "turn-out" time has been added to reflect the actual response time. Response time goals are set for one minute of "turn-out" time for the station personnel to prepare and board the apparatus. The additional time is travel time.

The remaining attachment shows the number of times each unit responded to a medical call in station 202's response area. The engine arrives first on the scene approximately 33% to 40% of the time. This information may be misleading, according to Fire Chief Mesaris. Each responding unit on an incident will push a button inside the apparatus to indicate its arrival. If an engine and a medic unit are both dispatched and leave quarters simultaneously, and the engine arrives seconds ahead of the medic unit, it will be documented as the engine arriving first on the scene. This is a common occurrence, as the engine will generally lead the medic unit in responses. Chief Mesaris clarified that the engine is not there to "clear traffic" for a medic unit and often this can be a hindrance to the medic unit. Traffic will often clear for the first unit as they hear the sirens, but are unaware that there is another unit following and pull back into traffic. This may slow the second responding unit.

In order to further clarify information presented at earlier meetings and by the media, representatives from the development group were in attendance to answer questions. This development group acquired the property in 2004 and the approvals were already in place.

The group stated a commitment to continue to seek affordable housing opportunities even if the fire station is not realized. The housing may be done differently, as that space may be used in a different manner without the station. The number of units contributed could also be reduced due to the cost of the land. The developer representatives stressed that the six million dollars set aside for the fire station has no impact on the affordable housing contribution.

When the plan for the fire station was proposed, the location of the affordable housing had not yet been determined. The plan to put it above the station was in order to leverage the cost with the city in order to provide more housing. The amount of housing was determined be estimating the number of housing unit within the entire development and as a result the voluntary contribution of six million dollars worth of housing was presented. The fire station and affordable housing was not a result of fundamental flaws in the design, contrary to what was presented by the media.

Representatives for the developer will continue to attend the Potomac Yard Fire Station and Affordable Housing Task Force meetings to answer questions and address concerns as necessary.

The next meeting of the Task Force will be Tuesday, August 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7pm in the Cora Kelly School cafeteria.

# August 22, 2006 Meeting Minutes Potomac Yard Fire Station & Affordable Housing Task Force

Chairman, Andrew Hall at the Cora Kelly School cafeteria on Commonwealth Avenue, called the meeting to order at 7:06pm.

The following Task Force Representatives were in attendance:

Andrew Hall, Del Ray Citizens Association

John Starcher, Warwick Village

Jim Schwartz, Arlington Fire Chief and Del Ray resident

Melissa Watson, Lynhaven Civic Association

Mariella Posey, NorthEast Citizens' Association

M. Patricia Schubert, ICCA

The following City employees were in attendance:

Del Pepper, City Council Member

Rob Krupicka, City Council Member

Jim Hartmann, City Manager

Michelle Evans, Deputy City Manager

Gary Mesaris, Fire Chief

Russell Middleton, Assistant Fire Chief

Vince Whitmore, Assistant Fire Chief

John North, Battalion Chief

Art Dahlberg, Director of Code Enforcement

Jannine Pennell, Deputy Director of Code Enforcement

Al Cox, Code Enforcement

Brain Hannigan, Public Information Officer

Jeff Farner, Development Division Chief, Planning and Zoning

Amy Tarce, Planning and Zoning

Colleen Rafferty, Planning and Zoning

Mildrilyn Davis, Office of Housing

Helen McIlvaine, Office of Housing

Sandy Murphy, Office of Management and Budget

The following guests were in attendance:

Amy Slack
Cathy Puskar, Walsh Colucci
Betty King
Duncan Blair
Judy Lowe
Kevin Hall, Potomac Yard Development
Lynn Kimmerly
Judy Harper
Andrew Rivera

Ted Kimmerly Larry Campbell Stephanie Campbell Sylvia Sibrover

Bruce McLeod, Commonwealth Consultants

David Fromm

Minutes prepared by: Cameron Hall, Alexandria Fire Department

Following brief task force introductions, Jeff Farner spoke on the concept plans for the Potomac Yard development.

The concept plan measures the site at 295 acres and calls for 1927 units and 135,000 square feet of retail space, 5,000 square feet of that would be built in Landbay H. The land is divided into "Landbays" in order to make it easier to designate the bodies in the Yard and create neighborhoods.

Framework streets were created and will construct the size of the blocks within the Yard. The framework streets are Potomac Avenue, Main Street, East Glebe Road, Swann Avenue, Howell Avenue, and Custis Avenue. For comparison, the blocks will be longer and narrower than those in both Old Town and Del Ray, however the streets widths are similar to those in other sections of the City.

Edge conditions around the alleys will try and discourage traffic. This creates a problem with the turning radiuses for fire apparatus and other large service trucks. The conflict occurs when approaching from the south end of the Yard. Therefore, the fire station was planned for Landbay H, in the northern section of the development. Please see the attached presentation by planning and zoning for a graphic illustration of the turning radiuses. All units from all fleets (including surrounding jurisdictions) will fit through these streets. All trucks are generally the same in size and the developer looked at worst case scenarios, meaning the largest of the trucks can be maneuvered through the Yard and down the alleys.

The developer worked with the Code Enforcement division on solutions. Not only was the fire station proposed to cut down on response times, each building in the Yard will be sprinklered. The City found this to be a very good opportunity for a new station considering that the Windsor Avenue station is in need of extensive renovation.

Chief Mesaris reiterated that the Alexandria Fire Department focuses on service delivery. He further assured the group that this move would not negatively impact service delivery. The Del Ray area is covered with great redundancy. A map of the City's service delivery is attached. The department tries to maintain a goal of four-minute response to all areas of the city as part of the service delivery system. The east end of the city has great four-minute, redundant coverage. Unfortunately, many areas in the west end do not have such redundancy and some don't have four-minute coverage at all. The placement of stations is determined by the relation of each station to other stations. The system of service delivery is citywide not according to neighborhoods.

Only five of the eight fire stations in the City of Alexandria currently have EMS units. If the proposal is realized and a station is built in Potomac Yard, the Windsor Avenue station would maintain EMS capacity because too large of an area would be outside the four-minute response area.

The task force presented a list of questions to be answered by City staff, please see the attachment labeled PY Task Force Q&A 8/22/06.

If the station is built in Potomac Yard, renovations will move forward with Station 202 on Windsor Avenue. The current proposal is to create an "EMS station" with both a medic unit and an EMS Supervisor. The plans could also include a community meeting room. This provides for the flexibility of the station to be returned to a fire suppression station in the future if necessary.

Several residents located near the Windsor Avenue station expressed concerns over future developments of the station. Including a meeting room could create traffic and parking problems for the residents. Michelle Evans, Deputy City Manager, assured the group that community input would be sought before any decisions are made. Nothing has been finalized and limits could be made on the size of the room and the occupancy numbers. The plans for the renovations to station 202 have been put on hold until a decision is made about the Potomac Yard station.

The task force requested a listing of basic call types and the type of apparatus responding to those calls. Please see attachment. Also attached are the call box numbers associated with the Warwick Village section of Del Ray and the number of incidents in that area for the past five years. Warwick Village is not unlike many neighborhoods within the city in that two different stations would respond to the area as first due. One section of the area would have station 203, located on Cameron Mills Road as first due, while the remaining would consider station 202, Windsor Avenue as the first due. The first two numbers in the "call boxes" refer to the first due responding station. 53 would refer to station 203, while 52 refers to station 202.

Also included in the attachments is a map of Arlington's coverage into the City of Alexandria.

The next meeting and the final meeting to include public comment will be held on Tuesday, August 29 at 7pm at the George Washington Middle School, 1005 Mount Vernon Avenue. The task force will also hold work sessions at the Mount Vernon Recreation Center at 2701 Commonwealth Avenue on Thursday, September 7 at 7pm, Sunday, September 10 at 2pm, and Thursday, September 14 at 6pm.

# August 29, 2006 Meeting Minutes Potomac Yard Fire Station & Affordable Housing Task Force

Chairman, Andrew Hall at George Washington Middle School cafeteria on Mount Vernon Avenue, called the meeting to order at 7:06pm.

The following Task Force Representatives were in attendance:

Andrew Hall, Del Ray Citizens Association

John Starcher, Warwick Village

Jim Schwartz, Arlington Fire Chief and Del Ray resident

Melissa Watson, Lynhaven Civic Association

Kate Rollins, Old Town Greens

M. Patricia Schubert, Inner City Civic Association

The following City employees were in attendance:

Del Pepper, City Council Member

Rob Krupicka, City Council Member

Gary Mesaris, Fire Chief

Russell Middleton, Assistant Fire Chief

Vince Whitmore, Assistant Fire Chief

John North, Battalion Chief

Jannine Pennell, Deputy Director of Code Enforcement

Brain Hannigan, Public Information Officer

Jeff Farner, Development Division Chief, Planning and Zoning

Amy Tarce, Planning and Zoning

Colleen Rafferty, Planning and Zoning

Mildrilyn Davis, Office of Housing

Helen McIlvaine, Office of Housing

Sandy Murphy, Office of Management and Budget

The following guests were in attendance:

Cathy Puskar, Walsh Colucci David Fromm Duncan Blair Jeremy Mader Sandra Rangel Amy Slack Lana Slack Pamela Bloxton Tim McGhee Dave Levy Andy Duncan Peggie Arridson-Dailey Justin Wilson Suzann Michael Daniel Horowitz Stephanie Campbell Larry Campbell **CB** Caples **Eric Sutton** John Abarre

Donna Beyer Patricia Armstrong
Judy Harper Michael Derrick
David Talmage Chuck Hagee
Chris Gullott Sharon Widmayer

Minutes prepared by: Cameron Hall, Alexandria Fire Department

For the benefit of those attending the Potomac Yard Task Force briefings for the first time, Jeff Farner of Planning and Zoning, Fire Chief Gary Mesaris, and Helen McIlvaine of the Office of Housing each presented the proposed plans for the Potomac Yard development.

# **Planning and Zoning**

The Potomac Yard has been divided into alphabetical designations referred to as landbays. The landbay that this task force is addressing is Landbay G, immediately south of the Potomac Yard retail development (Target). The design concept was approved in 1999 and focuses on an urban design with narrow streets, buildings constructed close to the curb, and stacked townhouses. The issue of the framework streets is set to go to Council in September so that construction can begin.

The framework streets have been designed so residents and visitors can walk through the series of neighborhoods, open spaces, and retail centers. The alleys have been designed to discourage traffic, to be used by only those that live there, collect refuse, or emergency vehicles.

Edge conditions around the alleys could create problems with the turning radiuses for fire apparatus and other large service trucks. The streets within the development are not too narrow. The problem lies with the turning radius into the alleys. The conflict occurs when approaching from the south end of the Yard. Therefore, the fire station was planned for Landbay G, in the northern section of the development. Please see the attached presentation by planning and zoning for a graphic illustration of the turning radiuses. All units from all fleets (including surrounding jurisdictions) will fit through these streets. All trucks are generally the same in size and the developer looked at worst case scenarios, meaning the largest of the trucks can be maneuvered through the Yard and down the alleys.

## **Fire Department**

In addition, all buildings in Potomac Yard will be sprinklered. The new station will be placed near the northern section of the Yard and will generally use the local roads, rather than Route 1 as the north and south roadway. Controlled intersections into Del Ray will include Glebe, Swann, Custis, and Howell.

The department uses a GIS computer model to determine response times throughout the entire city. The response times are plotted using posted speed limits and do not take weather or traffic into account. A fire on Glebe Road and Russell at 1:57pm on Monday, August 28<sup>th</sup> validates the system as the response time was exactly at 4 minutes, the department's goal. The goal is set as a one-minute turnout time for personnel out of the station and three minutes for travel time to the scene.

Chief Mesaris reiterated that the Alexandria Fire Department focuses on service delivery. He further assured the group that this move would not negatively impact service delivery. The Del Ray area is covered with great redundancy. A map of the City's service delivery is attached. The

department tries to maintain a goal of four-minute response to all areas of the city as part of the service delivery system. The east end of the city has great four-minute, redundant coverage. Unfortunately, many areas in the west end do not have such redundancy and some don't have four-minute coverage at all. The placement of stations is determined by the relation of each station to the other stations. The system of service delivery is citywide and crosses jurisdictional boundaries and is not according to neighborhoods.

# Housing

Helen McIlvaine, of the Office of Housing presented the proposal for the affordable housing project. The presentation is attached.

The Whole Foods located on Duke Street is an example of a mixed-use property that may be used for the fire station and affordable housing project.

The developer's voluntary affordable housing contribution for the overall site is estimated at \$10.5 million. They may fulfill that contribution through a monetary payment or through the commitment of specific units of affordable housing. The City and the Developer are working to identify potential sites, in order to achieve the greatest number of units.

The fire station proposal is planned to be four stories, containing approximately 60 units. The proposal includes underground parking (approximately 120 spaces), a community room, business center, fitness center, and access to a rooftop garden.

Affordable housing is a term used to describe rental or for sale housing where the maximum rent/sales price is set at or below 60% of the area median income. The Washington metropolitan region has a median income of approximately \$90,300 for a household of four.

# Proposed Income limits:

1 Person: \$37,920 2 Persons: \$43,320 3 Persons: \$48,780 4 Persons: \$54,180

The Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program was enacted by the Federal Government, but is administered by the state's housing authority, the Virginia Housing Development Association (VHDA). The program enables private investments in the production of affordable housing. Developers apply for tax credits based on project costs. These credits are sold to entities with tax liabilities, which provide equity for the credits in return. The maximum gross rents per month, including utilities are \$1,015/one bedroom, \$1,219/two bedroom, and \$1,408/three bedroom.

Workforce housing is another option for the space. Workforce housing describes rental or for sale housing where the maximum rent is set at a level that is affordable for local working households with income at or above 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI). This project has been modeled at 80% AMI.

Estimated income levels for this project:

1 Person: \$41,700 2 Persons: \$47,700 3 Persons: \$53,650 4 Persons: \$59,600

The mixed-use developments are considered "Smart Growth" in urban areas, as they allow for public facilities and maximize the use of land. If the fire station is not realized, the developer will still contribute his obligation of \$10.5 million. The advantage to the mixed-use building is that the city can leverage other funds like tax credits to further stretch the developer contribution.

If the housing project is realized, the city would appoint a designate non-profit agency to run the building. Anyone purchasing in the Potomac Yard development would be informed that affordable housing will be included in the site, but according to housing statistics, most every neighborhood in the City of Alexandria includes affordable housing in some way. It was suggested by Cathy Puskar to not focus time and attention on the affordable housing aspect of the proposal at this meeting because the developer intends to include affordable housing anyway. The only changes will be in the number of units. The developer will be able to include more units if the fire station is realized, as the land costs would not be an issue.

## **Developers**

Cathy Puskar of Walsh Colucci represented the developers at Tuesday's meeting. The firm purchased Potomac Yard in June 2004 and the approvals that came with it, that were made in 1999. The affordable housing contribution is approximately \$10.5 million.

In order to maintain the urban design guidelines, the fire station was proposed. Because the land is scarce inside the development, the affordable housing was proposed above and could be seen as a model for the country. While the developers hope that the plan of the fire station and affordable housing is realized, they have no interest in the city's plans for the fire station on Windsor Avenue.

# Q & A

The city currently maintains four fueling stations. The primary site is located on Wheeler Avenue. This site is encouraged, as it is the largest site within city limits and allows for larger refueling trucks keeping delivery costs low. Station 202 on Windsor Avenue and Station 208 on Pickett Street both maintain fueling stations as well. The frequency of use of these fueling stations will not change with the new development in Potomac Yard. There are no plans to include a fueling station at Station 209, should it be realized.

Additionally, the safe room located at Station 202, Windsor Avenue will not close, move, or change in any way. The safe room is not tied to the HazMat team or the engine personnel located at Station 202. The room is maintained for anyone to be used and a button located within the room connects the occupant to Fire Communications (dispatch) automatically. The personnel in

Fire Communications, located at Fire Department Headquarters will take the call and dispatch emergency vehicles appropriately.

A suggestion was raised that the Volunteer department could staff Engine 202 out of Windsor Station. Chief Mesaris answered that volunteers are used to supplement the current paid force, not alone. According to Fire Department protocol, volunteers do not contribute to minimum staffing levels.

The Fire Department continually monitors the response times of all units. In addition, all eight fire stations in the City of Alexandria have firefighting capability in an engine. An aerial ladder does not have firefighting capability and are only located at Station 204, Second Street, Station 203, Cameron Mills, and Station 208, Pickett Street.

The addition of the fourth bay at the new station was proposed to house fire apparatus that is currently stored outdoors at Station 202, Windsor Avenue. These are pieces of equipment that have been obtained by the City through homeland security grants and may not be replaced if damaged.

Code Enforcement will perform fire surveys and home inspections if requested by the homeowner. However, they have no authority to enter a home without a complaint or probable cause.

The development of Potomac Yard will create a larger volume of calls for the Alexandria Fire Department. However, these calls will be responded to from any unit (from any station) that would arrive in the shortest amount of time. If the station is not realized in Potomac Yard, units will have to come from one of the other stations, including Windsor Avenue, Second Street, or even Arlington County. Arlington is currently addressing the issue of implementing a station on its south side, but it is not currently in their top tier of capital improvement projects.

A suggestion of rounding off the corners of the buildings to allow for quicker emergency responses was negated as not part of the design concept.

The final meeting for pubic comment will be held on Tuesday, September 05, 2006 at the George Washington Middle School Auditorium at 7pm. The Task Force has scheduled work session meetings for Thursday, September 7 at 7pm, Sunday, September 10 at 2pm, and Thursday, September 14 at 6pm at the Mount Vernon Recreation Center at 2701 Commonwealth Avenue.

Further information is available on the website. www.alexandriava.gov/planningandzoning/potomac\_yard.php

# September 5, 2006 Meeting Minutes Potomac Yard Fire Station & Affordable Housing Task Force

Chairman, Andrew Hall at George Washington Middle School auditorium on Mount Vernon Avenue, called the meeting to order at 7:15pm.

The following Task Force Representatives were in attendance:

Andrew Hall, DRCA

John Starcher, WVCA

Jim Schwartz, Arlington Fire Chief and Del Ray resident

Melissa Watson, Lynhaven Civic Association

Kate Rollins, Old Town Greens

M. Patricia Schubert, ICCA

Mariella Posey, NECA

Tom Welsh, PWBA

The following City employees were in attendance:

Bill Euille, Alexandria Mayor

Andrew McDonald, City Council Member

Paul Smedberg, City Council Member

Del Pepper, City Council Member

Rob Krupicka, City Council Member

Jim Hartmann, City Manager

Michelle Evans, Deputy City Manager

Gary Mesaris, Fire Chief

Russell Middleton, Assistant Fire Chief

Vince Whitmore, Assistant Fire Chief

John North, Battalion Chief

Art Dahlberg, Director of Code Enforcement

Jannine Pennell, Deputy Director of Code Enforcement

Al Cox, Architect

Brian Hannigan, Public Information Officer

Jeff Farner, Development Division Chief, Planning and Zoning

Amy Tarce, Planning and Zoning

Colleen Rafferty, Planning and Zoning

Mildrilyn Davis, Office of Housing

Helen McIlvaine, Office of Housing

Sandy Murphy, Office of Management and Budget

# The following guests were in attendance:

Duncan Blair Arthur Johnson Stephen Mostow Jim Krustapentus Andy Duncan C. McCabe Kari Falkenborg Will Greene K. Fangman Terry Hill Daniel Steenstra Joe Dresen Jim Snyder Juliann Tigent Amy Slack Stafford Farmer-Lee David Kleiner Sarah Haut

M. Kleysteuber Michael Bergin Mitchell Holbreeht Brooke Cash Amanda Lenk Katy Cannady Jonathan Cash Sylvia Sibrover Sabrina Morelli Elizabeth Wrightson Bruce McLeod Scooter Slade Ed Walters **Kevin Hayes** Michael Brown Julie Walters Mike Platt Jenny Heimberg Nicole DelRosario Kris Gulett Jay Johnson

Minutes prepared by: Cameron Hall, Alexandria Fire Department

## **Planning and Zoning**

The Potomac Yard concept plan was approved in 1999 and includes 1,927 units and 135,000 square feet of retail over 295 acres. The area has been divided into geographic areas referred to as "landbays." Landbay G is located next to the existing retail center at Potomac Yard and will contain the Town Center. The developer has proposed adding the fire station and affordable housing component to this landbay.

The proposal to include the fire station is a result of an issue with turning radiuses within the development in Potomac Yard. The streets have been designed at 66 feet, similar to the streets in Old Town. The issue arises in the alley throats and the location of the buildings to the streets. With narrow alley throats and buildings placed close to the street curbs, there could be a problem with the turning radius for large trucks including fire apparatus. The problem is created as trucks try to maneuver from the southern portion of the Yard to the northern side. The fire station has therefore been proposed for the northern most landbay.

## **Fire Department**

The challenge for the Fire Department is to provide better, more modern living conditions for fire personnel as well as to provide storage for equipment that is currently housed outdoors. With the addition of the new, four-bay station in Potomac Yard, the department could house equipment that was purchased with Homeland Security grant funding that is currently stored outside at Station 202, Windsor Avenue.

When the developers proposed the addition of a fire station in Potomac Yard, fire personnel addressed the issues of service delivery and efficiency. The area currently covered by Station 202, Windsor Avenue has redundant coverage, or an excess of what is necessary. Station 203, Cameron Mills, Station 204, Second Street, and Station 205, Cameron Street can all cover the area of Station 202 within the department's response goal of 4 minutes.

Chief Mesaris reiterated that the EMS capabilities would not be moved out of Station 202 and in fact may be increased with the addition of an EMS Supervisor at that location. The station would not close with this proposal. For reasons of efficiency, the fire

suppression and HazMat personnel would move to Station 209, Potomac Yard while the EMS personnel would remain at Windsor Avenue.

# Housing

The affordable housing proposal has been planned to include sixty, one, two, and three bedroom units located above the fire station. The proposal includes underground parking (approximately 120 spaces), a community room, business center, fitness center, and access to a rooftop garden.

The developer's voluntary affordable housing contribution for the overall site is estimated at \$10.5 million. They may fulfill that contribution through a monetary payment or through the commitment of specific units of affordable housing. The City and the Developer are working to identify potential sites, in order to achieve the greatest number of units.

Affordable housing is a term used to describe rental or for sale housing where the maximum rent/sales price is set at or below 60% of the area median income. The Washington metropolitan region has a median income of approximately \$90,300 for a household of four.

# Proposed Income limits:

1 Person: \$37,920 2 Persons: \$43,320 3 Persons: \$48,780 4 Persons: \$54,180

The Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program was enacted by the Federal Government, but is administered by the state's housing authority, the Virginia Housing Development Association (VHDA). The program enables private investments in the production of affordable housing. Developers apply for tax credits based on project costs. These credits are sold to entities with tax liabilities, which provide equity for the credits in return. The maximum gross rents per month, including utilities are \$1,015/one bedroom, \$1,219/two bedroom, and \$1,408/three bedroom.

Workforce housing is another option for the space. Workforce housing describes rental or for sale housing where the maximum rent is set at a level that is affordable for local working households with income at or above 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI). This project has been modeled at 80% AMI.

Estimated income levels for this project:

1 Person: \$41,700 2 Persons: \$47,700 3 Persons: \$53,650 4 Persons: \$59,600

An advantage to mixed-use developments, considered "Smart Growth" in urban areas, is they allow for public facilities and maximize the use of land. With the high cost of real estate, the City could save the cost of the land because the developer is donating it. If the fire station is not realized, the developer will still contribute his obligation of \$10.5 million. Another advantage to the mixed-use building is that the city can leverage other funds like tax credits to further stretch the developer contribution.

# Q & A

A ladder (aerial) truck has not been proposed to move to Station 209, Potomac Yard. The reason is that there are only three ladder trucks in service currently in Alexandria including one at Station 204, Second Street, Station 203, Cameron Mills, and Station 208, Paxton Street. The first due apparatus on any fire suppression call is the engine. Alexandria has engines in all eight fire stations throughout the city.

An advantage to Station 209 inside Potomac Yard is to decrease the response times throughout the Yard. There could be instances when fire personnel will have to manually pull lines or hose and the proximity of the station would cut those response times.

The next step in the Potomac Yard Fire Station and Affordable Housing proposal, as answered by Task Force Chairman Andy Hall, is for the task force to complete its recommendations and proposals. The task force will forward those to City Council and the Planning Committee. Public hearings will continue to be held before the issue is voted on.

The City proposed to include a fourth bay into the station at Potomac Yard in order to provide storage space for equipment obtained through Homeland Security Grants. The City will cover the cost of adding the fourth bay at a cost of approximately \$750,000. However, this has not yet been presented to council and has not yet been approved.

There is no correlation between the age of a building and the likelihood of a fire. Most fires are caused by human error.

Homeowners' insurance costs are determined according to a jurisdictions ISO rating. Rates are not calculated according to the proximity to a fire station or hydrant.

The city expects to earn tax revenue from the new development, but that money will need to fund parks, transit systems, sewer lines, schools, etc. not only in Potomac Yard, but throughout the entire city. The fire department does not have neighborhood fire stations. It is a citywide system that even crosses into other jurisdictions through mutual aid agreements.

Some residents in the Del Ray area have expressed an emotional attachment to the fire station on Windsor Avenue and are opposed to the fire suppression moving out of that location. Suggestions for alternatives include adding an engine to Station 209 in Potomac Yard and keeping the personnel staffed at Windsor. City staff counter that this is an

inefficient use of taxpayers' dollars and in a time of fiscal responsibility cannot endorse such a solution. Other suggestions included asking the new residents in the Potomac Yard development to pay for their own station. However, according to Chief Mesaris, the fire department does not operate on a neighborhood system, but a citywide system, however the performance of the system is continually evaluated.

The task force has scheduled work session meetings at the Mount Vernon Recreation Center, 2701 Commonwealth Avenue for Thursday, September 7 at 7pm, Sunday, September 10 at 2pm, and Thursday, September 14 at 6pm. While the public is invited to attend, public comment will not be invited.

# August 2, 2006 Work Session Minutes Potomac Yard Fire Station and Affordable Housing Task Force

Andrew Hall of the Del Ray Civic Association called the work session to order at 7:06pm, in the meeting room of the Mount Vernon Recreation Center on Commonwealth Avenue. While the public was invited to attend the work session, comment was not invited.

The following representatives were in attendance:

Andrew Hall

John Starcher

Melissa Watson

Jim Schwartz

Helen McIlvaine

Tom Welsh

Mariella Posey

Michelle Evans, Deputy City Manager

Brian Hannigan, Communications Director

Gary Mesaris, Fire Chief

John North, Battalion Chief

Amy Tarce, Planning & Zoning

Colleen Rafferty, Planning & Zoning

Minutes prepared by: Cameron Hall, Alexandria Fire Department

#### Outreach

The task force was assembled in order to educate the citizens of Alexandria about the Potomac Yard project. Currently, there are concerns that a number of citizens are still unaware of the project and the task force discussed ways to widen the outreach.

The Del Ray Sun is publishing an article and a reporter from the Washington Post will be in attendance at the Tuesday, August 8<sup>th</sup> public meeting.

The Warwick Village and the Del Ray Civic Associations have both sent mass emails after each meeting. The Lynhaven Association is scheduled to meet on Monday, August 7<sup>th</sup> and this topic is included on the agenda.

Chief Schwartz stated that because this is a public safety issue and could affect future decision regarding staffing and funding, all citizens from the entire city should be included in the meetings and made aware of the project. As a result, the task force decided that it will be important to include associations and other citizen groups from other portions of the city, including the west side.

The PWBA has extended an invitation to members of the task force and city staff to attend the monthly luncheon on the third Monday of August. The lunch is held at the Mount Vernon Recreation Center, 2701 Commonwealth Avenue at 12:00 noon. Tickets are \$10 per person.

Brian Hannigan, Alexandria Public Information Officer stated that all information will be posted on the Enews link on the city website. Subscribers to this site may choose from a variety of information or choose to have access to all that is posted. He also stated that members of the city staff are working to make more information available.

It was also suggested to send flyers home with children as they begin school and/or with the PTA members.

The task force decided to distribute a fact sheet in a question and answer format. This fact sheet will contain information provided by the Fire Department, Planning and Zoning, and the Office of Housing. It will also direct readers to the website for additional information and copies of previous meetings minutes. John Starcher has volunteered to put together the fact sheet. He will submit to the entire task force for review before it is distributed to the public.

## **Timeline**

Michelle Evans, Deputy City Manager notified the Task Force that the project may be delayed until the October planning session, which will provide additional time for outreach. This will be discussed further at the meeting on August 8<sup>th</sup>.

# Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, Emrich, & Walsh, P.C.

Specific questions will be compiled for the Developer for a future meeting. While they had representation at the previous meeting, they may have been unaware that comments were expected. Due to vacation schedules, a representative will not be in attendance on Tuesday, August 8<sup>th</sup>. However, Attorney, Cathy Puskar will be present on Tuesday, August 15<sup>th</sup>.

# **Planning and Zoning**

The members of the task force wanted clarification on the Monroe Street bridge project and the accessibility of apparatus from Station 204 on Powhatan and Second into the Potomac Yard development. The Monroe Street Bridge will be straightened, but there will be no other new roads between Potomac Yard and Station 204. Chief Mesaris reminded the group that the fire department would utilize local roads within the development rather than rely upon Route 1 and Glebe Road. In addition, the intersections on Swann, Custis, and East Glebe will all be controlled and the Fire Department may have the ability to preempt the traffic lights.

## **Future Agendas**

The Office of Housing will have a presentation available for the meeting scheduled on Tuesday, August 8<sup>th</sup>.

Chief Schwartz suggested postponing the meeting on Tuesday, August 8<sup>th</sup> in order to complete additional outreach. An extended timeline will allow for the task force to perform additional

outreach. The task force decided that community meetings were an important outreach program and therefore rejected postponing the August 8<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The group completed the meeting by composing a template for the recommendation to City Council. The template includes an executive summary of the project and the pros and cons. The recommendation portion will be left blank until further research is completed.

The next meeting will be held at 7pm at the Mount Vernon Community School on Commonwealth Avenue.

The following is the meeting schedule as it stands to date.

Tuesday -7 - 9 p.m. - **Aug 15th** Task Force work session (suggest Mt Vernon or Cora Kelly Rec. Center)

Tuesday – 7 – 9 p.m. - Aug 22nd Cora Kelly public comment invited

Tuesday - 7 – 9 p.m. - Aug 29th GW Middle School public comment invited

Tuesday – 7 – 9 p.m. - **Sep 5th** Place to be determined public comment invited Final Public Meeting (suggest auditorium at GW Middle School or Mt. Vernon with Audio & Visual Support) Tuesday

Thursday -7 - 9 p.m. - **Sep 7th** Task Force work session (suggest Mt Vernon or Cora Kelly Rec. Center)

Sunday -2-5 p.m. - **Sep 10th** Task Force work session (suggest Mt Vernon or Cora Kelly Rec. Center)

Friday -6-9 p.m. **Sep 15th** (order dinner in?) Task Force Finalizes Report (suggest Mt Vernon or Cora Kelly Rec. Center)

# September 7, 2006 Work Session Minutes Potomac Yard Fire Station & Affordable Housing Task Force

Chairman, Andrew Hall called the task force work session to order at 7:05pm in the meeting room at the Mount Vernon Recreation Center, 2701Commonwealth Avenue.

The following Task Force Representatives were in attendance: Andrew Hall, DRCA
John Starcher, WVCA
Jim Schwartz, Arlington Fire Chief and Del Ray resident
Melissa Watson, Lynhaven Civic Association
Kate Rollins, Old Town Greens
Tom Welsh, PWBA

The following City employees were in attendance: Gary Mesaris, Fire Chief Russell Middleton, Assistant Fire Chief John North, Battalion Chief Brian Hannigan, Public Information Officer Michele Evans, Deputy City Manager Helen McIlvaine, Office of Housing

The following guests were in attendance: Bruce McLeod David Fromm

Minutes prepared by: Cameron Hall, Alexandria Fire Department

After reading the directive from City Council, the task force organized their response. Some items, including dissenting views and open items will be included in the task force's recommendations even though they are considered out of the job description of the task force. The response will include reports on the findings of the task force, pros and cons, and recommendations.

The pros/cons will be a reflection of what the task force evaluated from both city staff members and the citizens and will be based on information heard at the public meetings. The lack of attendance at the public meetings by the majority of city residents creates a problem for the task force because it is difficult to know what they think about the issues at hand.

The task force will focus on three areas, public safety, affordable housing, and the proposal to move the suppression units from station 202 to station 209. The overall themes will include community emotion, fiscal impact and responsibility, and the ability to maximize the affordable housing contribution.

Michele Evans brought the Potomac Yard tax revenue projections from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The entire document is attached.

## **Affordable Housing**

Term limits are sometimes attached to affordable housing; however, the city does not generally use these limits. According to Helen McIlvaine, most residents will move on when they are economically able. However, some will never move, as their income levels do not change that drastically each year. Others will not move, as they feel an emotional attachment to their home.

The affordable housing contribution could be used as a recruitment tool for the city for police officers, firefighters, medics, and teachers. The task force expressed making a commitment for units to be used for this purpose. The goal is to keep the units as affordable housing and use non-profit groups to manage rather than the developers. Currently, the affordable housing issues are only concepts and the plans have not yet been approved. There are still unknowns as to if the units will be rentals or for-sale units or completely affordable or include workforce housing.

If they are for-sale units, all buyers must be income eligible and must sell to those who are income eligible. Selling prices will remain constant, but will reflect the market rates.

The task force listed pros and cons to the affordable housing issue. Pros include the maximization of the developer contribution (the land would not have to be purchased by the city) and units made available for public safety workers and teachers. Cons include the unknowns, decisions on rental or for-sale units, fear of Section-8 housing with the concentration of the units in one location, and a decision has not been made on who will run the property.

# **Building Station 209 and Moving Station 202 Suppression Units**

Because station 202, Windsor Avenue will remain open, the fire department will increase storage space for equipment and have additional resources. It also allows for the ability to move back to station 202 in the future if demand necessitates. The new station will also be a modern, improved working environment for firefighters, containing much needed storage space, and include other amenities such as a community room and administrative space.

The new station will also more evenly distribute fire suppression coverage throughout the city. More areas will be covered in the fire department's four-minute response goals. No areas will have diminished or degraded service. Response times are measured in areas, not individual addresses. The city will maintain a four-minute response time, while improving response times to areas such as Arlandria and parts of Warwick Village. The negatives include the public's perception that service will be downgraded and that some addresses require quicker response times because of the type of construction and age of the homes. It has been discussed that lightweight, later construction could pose a greater hazard; however, most fires are not caused by construction factors, but rather human error.

Station 202, Windsor Avenue is a historical building and complete renovations are not an option. If the station could address all the needs of the fire department or could even be addresses through

renovations, the city would not have agreed to discuss a new station. It would be a moot point, but station 202 does not meet all the needs of the department.

The task force will hold work sessions on Sunday, September 10 at 2pm and Thursday, September 14 at 6pm at the Mount Vernon Recreation Center, 2701 Commonwealth Avenue.